



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 18 July 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
18 JULY 1968

1. Czechoslovakia

The split among European Communists over Czechoslovakia is sharper than ever. The French Communist Party, badly shaken over the prospect of heavier Soviet intervention, is now calling for a European Communist conference to take up the Czech problem. Several parties have already responded favorably.

There are reports that Tito will arrive in Prague today to give his support to Dubcek. Rumania's Ceausescu may arrive at about the same time.

The letter sent to the Czechs by the participants of the Soviet-sponsored meeting in Warsaw has now been published. It demands that the Czechs get their party back into orthodox line, but there is still no mention of what action will be taken if this is not done.

The meeting of the Soviet central committee yesterday was evidently called essentially to endorse the Warsaw letter.

2. Turkey

At last count, two US sailors had been hospitalized and 17 others treated for superficial injuries as a result of the anti-American riot in Istanbul yesterday. Not all of the sailors have been accounted for yet, however. The Turkish police and military bungled the job of controlling the mob.

3. Iraq

The right-wing Baathist group which took over in Baghdad yesterday seems to be well in control. The capital is apparently calm, and the curfew imposed during the coup was scheduled to be lifted during daylight hours today.

4. South Vietnam

Thieu's position on the question of negotiating with the Liberation Front has evolved a bit further.

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He now says that Saigon might initiate the contacts, although he is inclined to think the first moves will be made by the Front or by Hanoi after they have taken further military punishment. He says his government has already begun quiet efforts to condition "opinion makers" in Saigon to the idea of direct contacts with the Front.

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Thieu clearly thinks the Communists will be the suppliants in any negotiations, and he believes his government will be in a position to accept or reject proposals made by the other side.

Thieu insists--as he did in June--that any contacts must be secret. He also makes it clear--as he did not do in June--that he is absolutely opposed to the idea of a coalition with the Front.

5. Nigeria

Direct political contacts between the two sides in the civil war are again in the offing.

The Biafrans have accepted an invitation to attend special meetings on Nigeria sponsored by the Organization of African Unity. A high-level federal Nigerian delegation is already attending the sessions being held next door in Niger.

The meetings are aimed essentially at finding a face-saving cease-fire formula, but we don't rate the chances of this as high.

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6. France

Ambassador Shriver made his initial call on Foreign Minister Debre on Monday. The meeting was largely a monologue by the Frenchman. These are his main points:

--As a result of President Johnson's historic decision of 31 March, the US has taken the first steps toward solving the Vietnam problem. This has deeply impressed De Gaulle: "The General feels old age coming on him and wants to see these great outstanding questions settled while he is still active."

--De Gaulle is firmly convinced that a profound reform of the international monetary system, a change in the privileged position of the dollar, and a change in the value of gold are indispensable.

--The General is also convinced that US congressmen and other prominent Americans are inclined to look too closely into French domestic affairs and make misjudgments. France is accused of nationalism and of blocking the formation of European institutions. Gaullism, however, is not nationalism in the Napoleonic sense, but patriotism which De Gaulle has rekindled in the French people.

Debre personally impressed Shriver as a most unlikely occupant of the top job in anybody's foreign ministry. "His candor is refreshing, and he is articulate and forceful, but he looks, talks and acts like a doctrinaire zealot--a political infighter rather than an effective spokesman of France."

7. Cambodia

The Cambodian navy's seizure yesterday of a US landing craft with ten US servicemen followed a number of serious border incidents. Sihanouk holds the US responsible for Cambodian casualties incurred during these incidents and only yesterday sent a sharply worded protest to U Thant requesting his intervention with Washington. Sihanouk has also threatened to bring to trial US personnel caught violating Cambodian territory.

Under these circumstances, Sihanouk will almost certainly feel himself compelled to win some kind of face-saving gesture from the US before he releases the servicemen. He will probably also use the incident to drive home the fact that the US is the only large nation that has refused formally to "recognize" Cambodia's borders.

8. Soviet Union - Communist China

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes

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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

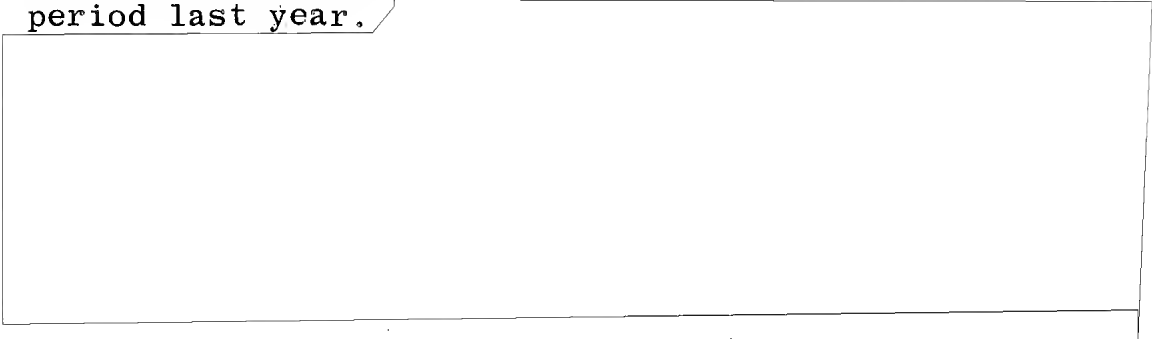
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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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Shipping to North Vietnam: Cargo deliveries to North Vietnam by foreign-flag ships showed a 26 percent increase in the first half of 1968 over the same period last year.



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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing significant to report today.

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